

January 23, 2004
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-- REMARKS --

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesies shown in the interview of January 14, 2004.

The Examiner objected to the drawings. Proposed corrected drawings are attached herewith, obviating the Examiner's objection. Withdrawal of the objection is requested.

The Examiner objected to the Abstract. An amended abstract is attached herewith, obviating the Examiner's objection. Withdrawal of the objection is requested.

Claims 1-16 were rejected under 102(e) as anticipated by Scheer, US Patent Application Publication 2002/0143669. The rejection under 102(e) as anticipated by Scheer is traversed. Scheer fails to disclose at least "defining a database for indicating functional relationships between a plurality of parts; and searching the database to identify one or more groups of functionally interchangeable parts" as claimed in claim 1. At most, Scheer discloses that an agent may determine if a distributor has access to any equivalent products. See, Scheer, para. 0147. Scheer does not disclose the existence of any database for indicating functional relationships between a plurality of parts. Therefore, Scheer cannot anticipate claim 1.

Claims 6 and 13 include similar limitations as claim 1, and are therefore allowable over Scheer for at least the same reasons. Claims 2, 7-12, 14 and 16 depend directly or indirectly from claims 1, 6, and 13 and are therefore allowable over Scheer for at least the same reasons.

Furthermore, since Scheer does not disclose a database indicating functional relationships between a plurality of parts, Scheer likewise cannot disclose searching the database, as further claimed in claims 1, 6, and 13.

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Additionally, Scheer does not disclose "defining a first table identifying a plurality of parts; defining a second table, associated with the first table, indicating functional relationships between the parts; and recursively searching the first and second tables to generate [a] list of interchangeable parts" as claimed in claim 3. Claims 4 and 5 depend directly or indirectly from claim 3 and are therefore allowable over Scheer for at least the same reasons

Withdrawal of the rejections to claims 1-16 is requested.

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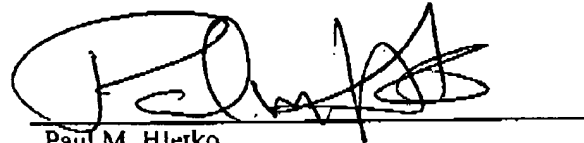
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CONCLUSION

The Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-16 fully satisfy the requirements of 35 U.S.C §§102, 103 and 112. In view of the foregoing, favorable consideration and early passage to issue of the present application is respectfully requested.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

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An inventory management system and method that is capable of generating lists of interchangeable parts. The system includes a database for indicating functional relationships between parts and a search engine for searching the database to identify groups of functionally interchangeable parts. The database includes a first table identifying the parts and a second table indicating the functional relationships between the parts. The search engine recursively searches the first and second tables to dynamically generate the lists of interchangeable parts. ~~This permits a user to quickly determine what parts are available in inventory for manufacturing tasks, and promotes more efficient utilization of inventoried parts.~~